

what if...

*What if you don't immunize
your child? While California
law provides for exemptions
to required immunizations,
concerned parents should
still consider the
consequences of not
immunizing their children.*



**Without immunizations,
your child is at greater risk
of catching one of the
vaccine-preventable diseases.**

Your child is susceptible to dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases. Fighting these diseases takes a great deal of time, money, and pain. That's why vaccines were developed to prevent them. Vaccines are very safe, and the threat of these diseases is very real:

- Pertussis or “whooping cough” is an extremely dangerous disease for infants and young children. It is not easily treated and can result in permanent brain damage and death. California had nearly 600 cases of pertussis in 1993, with two deaths.
- During the 1988-90 measles epidemic in California, 2,014 infants and preschool-age children were hospitalized, and 44 died.
- Diphtheria is an infectious disease of the nose and throat that can lead to serious breathing problems, heart failure, paralysis and even death. There is no risk of serious reaction to the diphtheria vaccine. Yet,

several years ago, the Department of Health Services was consulted on a tragic case in which a little boy who had just entered school died of diphtheria. His father had chosen not to have him immunized. The boy was the only unimmunized pupil in his class.

**Without immunizations,
your child can be a disease
threat to other children.**

Unfortunately, children who are not immunized pose a threat of transmission when there is disease in the community. They can pass the disease on to babies who are too young for immunizations.

They also pose a threat to children with medical exemptions, including children with leukemia, who cannot be immunized because of their medical condition.

For a very small percentage of children, vaccines will not “take.” These children also are put at risk. The only way we can protect them is to surround them with immunized children. Children with exemptions can spread disease to such children who are unaware that they are not protected.

Recent outbreaks of pertussis mostly involved children with exemptions. In the measles epidemic, students with personal beliefs exemptions were many times more likely to catch measles than those who were immunized.

if...

● ***your child will be
left at great risk of
catching the
disease?***

● ***your child will be a
threat to others?***

● ***your child at times
must be kept out of
school or child
care?***

● **Without immunizations, your
child may have to be excluded
from school or child care
during disease outbreaks.**

During outbreaks, unimmunized children may have to be excluded from school or child care until the outbreak is over, both for their own protection and for the protection of others. This causes a real hardship on the child as well as on the parent.

what if...?

As a parent, you can choose. We encourage you on behalf of your child and the other children in your child's school or child care facility to choose protection for your child. Choose immunizations.

We advise you to immunize your child, but in the end the decision is yours. We encourage you to talk to a trusted doctor or nurse, or call the Immunization Coordinator at your local health department. Your final decision affects not only the health of your child, but your child's classmates as well.

*Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor
State of California*

*Kimberly Belsbe, Secretary
Health and Human Services Agency*

*Sandra Shewry, Director
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